

MARIE SELBY
BOTANICAL
GARDENS



*We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century
Florida, The Highwaymen*

Visual Arts Curriculum

Grades 6-8



Curricular Unit Designed and Prepared by Dr. Jackie Henson-Dacey, 2021

Overview and Purpose

Students will explore, describe, analyze, interpret, and create artworks that reflect a deep understanding of the exhibition: ***We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century Florida, The Highwaymen.***

Standards covered by this unit:

Visual Arts

VA.68.C.1 Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.

VA.68.S.2 Development of skills, techniques, and processes in the arts strengthens our ability to remember, focus on, process, and sequence information.

VA.68.O.3 Every art form uses its own unique language, verbal, and non-verbal, to document and communicate with the world.

VA.68.F.1 Creating, interpreting, and responding to the arts stimulate the imagination and encourage innovation and creative risk-taking.

VA.68.H.1 Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d).

Lesson One: Visual Literacy (45 minutes)

Display printed images or prepare a PowerPoint showing selected works of art from the exhibition, ***We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century Florida, The Highwaymen.***

Allow students time to closely observe the artworks. Provide each student with a *Reason and Interpretation* card.

Reason and Interpretation
Hey! What's Going On?
<p>Choose one of the paintings from this exhibition of the Florida Highwaymen, and as you study the work answer these two simple questions by describing what you see and building explanations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is going on?• What makes you say that? <p>Compare your answers with a peer or small group and discover different perspectives, interpretations, and explanations.</p>

Reason and Interpretation	Reason and Interpretation
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Ask students to work independently first and then to find a peer(s) that selected the same artwork to examine. Form small discussion groups and then ask students to share out in the larger group. Help students use more accurate language to reveal their thinking by providing a list of art elements and principles of design as a reference.



Crystal Productions: <https://www.amazon.com/Elements-Art-Principles-Design-Poster/dp/B01GKRZOPQ>

Lesson Two: Who are the Florida Highwaymen? Flashcards in Art: Reading and Sharing Knowledge

Display the following artworks from the exhibition, either print in color for student use or present PowerPoint on monitor for students.



Harold Newton, *Fire Sky*



Harold Newton, *Hibiscus*



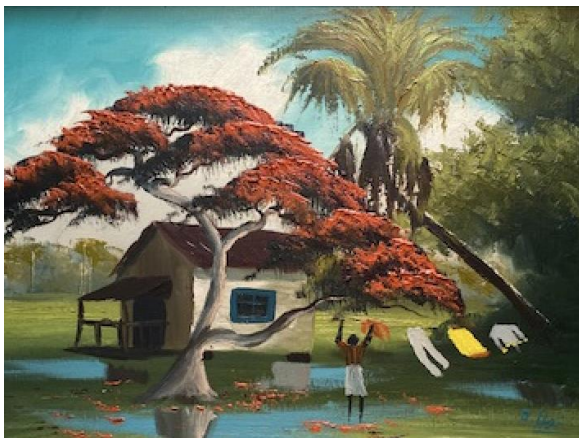
Harold Newton, *Rough Surf Crashing Ashore*



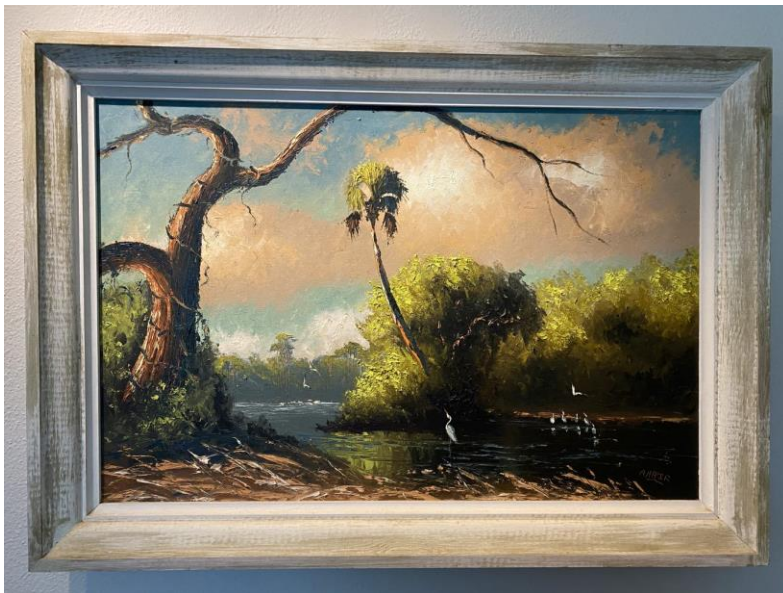
Mary Ann Carroll, *Twilight Orange Sunset*



Mary Ann Carroll, *Royal Poinciana on the Indian River*



Alfred Hair, *Washer Woman*



Alfred Hair, *Old Florida*



Alfred Hair, *Poinciana on the River*

Print out the *Flashcards in Art* sets. This activity can be done with partners, small groups, or large groups. Ask the same questions below for each featured artist.

Ask the following questions:

- Which of the paintings by a member of the Florida Highwaymen group, do you like the best? And why?
- Which painting represents Florida best? Why?
- What art elements are used in these paintings?
- What principles of design are seen in these paintings?

Ask students to find a partner (or assign partners) for the *Flashcards in Art* activity.

Important fact: The Florida Highwaymen did not choose to go by this name when they began painting in the 1950s. The name was coined by an art collector and gallery owner, Jim Fitch, in 1990.

Print a set of Flashcards for each student. Pass out one set at a time to help organize the activity. Each student will read one section of the Flashcard and use a set of highlighters or colored pencils to underline the following words and phrases that:

- 1) Help provide an understanding of the **content** of the artwork (yellow)
- 2) Help provide an understanding of the **context** of the artwork (orange)
- 3) Need to **define** this word (green)
- 4) **One phrase** that is the most important in the Flashcard (blue)

Content: refers to what is being depicted.

Context: would include when the work was made; where it was made (both culturally and geographically); why it was made; and possibly some other details or information.

Ask students to read their sections silently and to use either the highlighters or colored pencils to help identify information and facts to share with the larger group.

Ask students to share what they have learned, reinforcing the use of art terminology as they share ideas from the reading passages. You may choose to pass out all *Flashcards in Art* at one time to the larger group or divide the reading into sections to provide a deeper dive with smaller groups of students. Please set aside some time to allow students to define terms they are not familiar with from the reading sections. You might want to keep an active vocabulary list going on a white board or poster for students to view as they are learning about the Florida Highwaymen and their paintings.

Flashcards in Art (set 1: Harold Newton)

A: Background on Harold Newton	B: Background on Harold Newton
<p>Harold Newton was an African American artist who painted images of the Florida landscape to symbolize the <i>American Dream</i>. Florida was viewed as a paradise by the outside world. Newton, along with other Florida Highwaymen, painted images of this foreign and mysterious landscape up and down the east coast from Fort Pierce and Daytona Beach to Fort Lauderdale, as well as inland around Lake Okeechobee. Although Newton could produce several paintings in one day, he created paintings that were technically astute. His painting style reflected a knowledge of traditional Romanticism and the Hudson River School artists. He would travel up and down route A1A and would visit businesses during the day to sell his artwork from the trunk of his car. Sometimes the oils were still wet. His work was considered fast painting, but Newton's work was never rushed. Harold painted on inexpensive Upson board, a thick cardboard used for house construction, instead of canvas.</p>	<p>Harold Newton was a successful artist and businessman. He was considered an entrepreneur. That means that he organized and operated his own business, taking on greater than normal financial risks. He only had a few career opportunities in Florida during the 1950s. He could either work picking fruit in the orange groves or pull beans in a nearby field. Newton decided to paint the Florida landscape instead. This was risky, because during the 1950s, the Jim Crow laws kept Florida residents segregated and did not provide the same financial opportunities to African Americans. Jet travel, interstate systems, mosquito control, and air conditioning were new and made Florida a great tourism state. Newton painted exotic flowers, swaying palm trees, and beautiful sunsets. His paintings brought nature indoors. He met another artist named A.E. "Beanie" Backus in downtown Fort Pierce. Backus used a palette knife to spread paint and build images. Harold would watch him paint in his gallery and soon began using a palette knife to improve his own technique.</p>

Flashcards in Art (set 2: Mary Ann Carroll)

A: Background on Mary Ann Carroll	B: Background on Mary Ann Carroll
<p>Mary Ann Carroll was the only female artist associated with the original group of Florida Highwaymen. In the world in which she grew up, black women were provided with limited opportunities. During the 1950s and 1960s, Florida was still segregated, but Mary Ann's life as a prospering artist crossed race and class lines. Social norms of the time were dismissive of, if not downright hostile toward, black ambition. Instead of cleaning houses for five dollars a day, Mary Ann Carroll would sell two paintings a day and make fifty dollars. Her paintings could bring home hundreds of dollars after just a couple of hours of work. The money from the sale of her paintings provided for her family. She woke up every morning and prayed for strength and happiness. She often described her artwork as expressing her love for God. She dedicated her time to family, art, and church.</p>	<p>Mary Ann Carroll's artwork represents the beauty of Florida with colorful landscapes, palm trees, and shimmering waters. These images reinforced the romantic images of Florida that many people held during this time. The scenes that Mary Ann Carroll painted suggest serenity and undisturbed wilderness. Beaches, marshes, water birds, poinciana and palm trees are among the most common imagery. The Florida Highwaymen group did not paint landscapes directly, but rather created these scenes from memory and imagination in their backyards.</p> <p>Mary Ann Carroll met Harold Newton while he was painting on a street corner in their neighborhood. Harold showed Mary Ann how to mix oil paints to achieve various colors to create the evening sky. All of the Florida Highwaymen learned from one another and began developing their neighborhood, Avenue D in Fort Pierce, as a center for black-owned establishments.</p>

Flashcards in Art (set 3: Alfred Hair)

A: Background on Alfred Hair	B: Background on Alfred Hair
<p>Alfred Hair was drawn to art even as a child, like most of the Florida Highwaymen. In the early 1950s, Alfred Hair's art teacher Zanobia Jefferson introduced him to Fort Pierce painter A.E. "Beanie" Backus. Backus, a gallery owner and painter, served as a mentor to Alfred Hair as well as Harold Newton. Backus invited these young African American artists to study his painting techniques. The Florida Highwaymen group were not formally trained. They learned painting techniques from one another, while also developing their own style. Alfred Hair, along with the other Florida Highwaymen, were barred from showing their works in galleries, art shows, and other venues. In response, Alfred Hair inspired the group and became a very creative and persuasive salesman. Most notably, the Highwaymen sold their works on the sides of roadways. They would also travel door-to-door and frequented churches and offices.</p>	<p>Alfred Hair was the true "organizer" of the Florida Highwaymen. He selected the materials commonly identified with the Highwaymen: the Upson board used as canvas and the crown molding used for frames. His work represented "fast painting." Alfred Hair's work depicted turquoise seas, peach clouds, and scarlet royal poinciana trees. The Florida Highwaymen group considered Alfred Hair their creative leader, although they did not call themselves Highwaymen. They were a group of young African American artists who supported one another. They were mostly concerned with painting quickly and capturing the tropical beauty of Florida in bright colors. It wasn't until 1995 that a gallery owner and collector, Jim Fitch, coined the term Florida Highwaymen.</p>

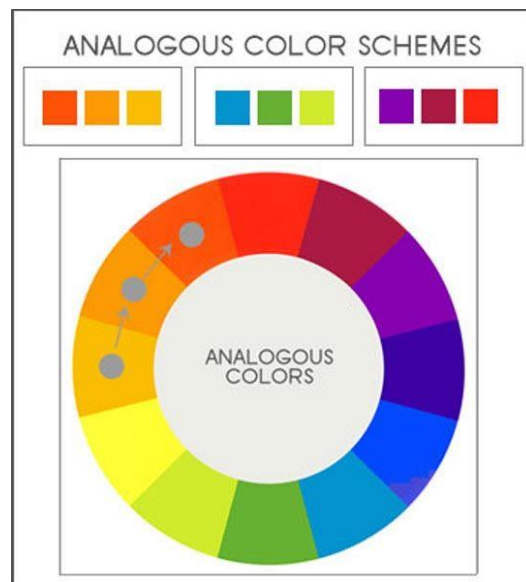
Lesson Three: Making art as a community (60-75 minutes)

Display the artworks from the exhibition, either print in color for student use or present PowerPoint on monitor for students.

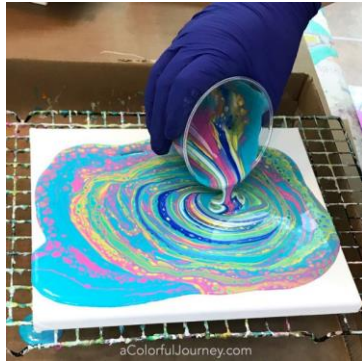
Supplies needed:

- Tag board (or Bristol board) *you can also use cardboard (but needs to be primed)
(large sheets: 11 x17 or 12 X 18)
- Acrylic paints (or liquid tempera)
- Paint brushes (varying sizes)
- Tongue depressors
- Paper cups
- Pencils
- Oil pastels
- Scissors
- Elmer's glue

Cover your workstation with craft paper or newspaper. Place students into small groups to help create backgrounds using a pour technique with the paints. If using acrylic paints, mix them with water to create a 1:4 ratio (one-part water to 4 parts paint). Tempera paints are already thin enough to pour and will not need to be diluted with water. Slowly demonstrate how to pour paint onto the surface of the paper (or cardboard). Students will need to work slowly to allow the paints to mix together. This is a good time to review and apply analogous color theory. Colors that form a family of colors mix best together. Three colors or hues that sit next to each other on the color wheel form a family or analogous group (example: yellow, orange, orange red).



Source: http://goldfieldupc.com/#google_vignette



Paint Pouring

Source: <https://acolorfuljourney.com/paint-pouring-workshop/paint-pouring-workshop-carolyn-dube/>

Source: <https://montmarte.net/creativeconnection/lessons-and-tips/show/12-acrylic-pouring-hacks>

After the students have filled at least one piece of paper (or cardboard) with paints, let them dry. They can use the tongue depressors to move the paint around while it is still wet. If you cannot move these paintings to the drying rack, you might want to devote a space on a countertop for drying.

Have students make a view finder (see below) to help find an area on the painted paper that will produce a nice Florida sky or water. You can also pre-make all the view finders out of scrap paper to handout to students. Older students will be able to create them by cutting out the center of a folded piece of paper. Trace over the area using the view finder as a guide and have students cut out a section from their painted paper that is no larger than 6 X 6 inches.



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/605171268658934605/>

After students have cut out their section of the painted paper, have them draw a palm tree or other Florida tree on the paper, use either black paint, sharpies, or oil pastels (black) to fill in, creating a silhouette.

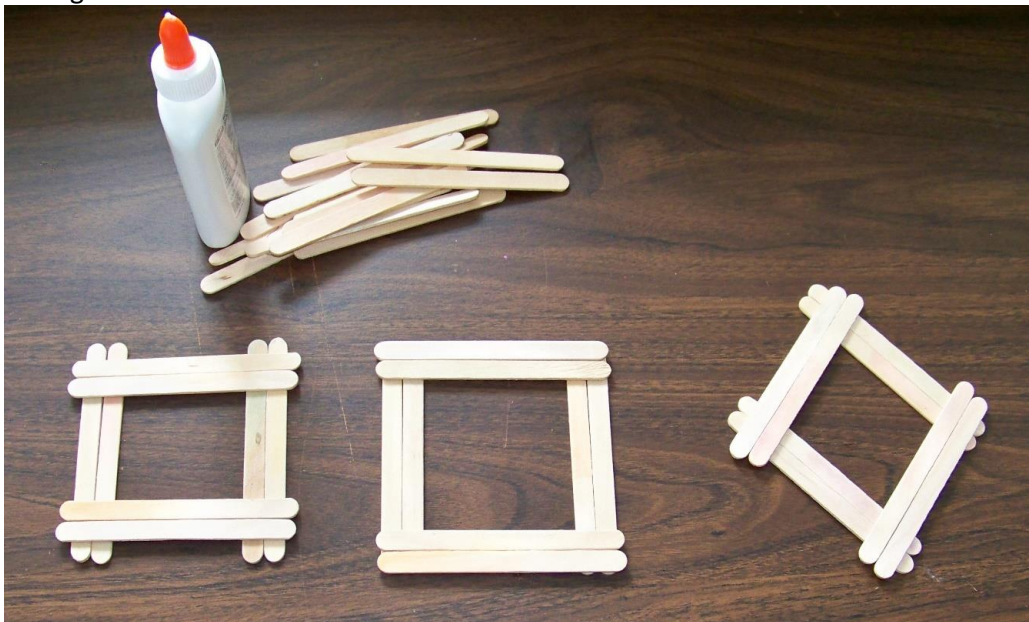


Example of silhouette painting.

Source: <https://wallpaperhunterfor.blogspot.com/2018/06/beach-sunset-painting-ideas.html>

Encourage students to add details to include water or the horizon line. Students may use either paints, black sharpies, or oil pastels to complete the paintings.

Use the tongue depressors to either move the paint around on the paintings (while still wet) or to glue together to make frames for each mini painting. The Florida Highwaymen built their own frames out of crown molding. Students can glue tongue depressors together to make frames for each mini painting. You may also encourage students to write descriptive words on the frame, or paint the frame using analogous colors.



Source: <https://arrowskidsclub.wordpress.com/2012/08/18/basic-popsicle-stick-picture-frame/>

Prepare an exhibition space at your school. Think about providing the students with a way to present their knowledge with artwork and writing.

Formative Assessment: 20-30 minutes (make a copy for each student to use with the exhibition)

3-2-1 Exhibition Writing Activity

What are three important words that describe the artwork on display?

What are two things that this exhibition has in common with the Florida Highwaymen?

What is the most important skill or idea that you learned from this painting assignment?

Allow students to either work in small groups or independently to fill out the 3-2-1 Activity. Ask students to share their answers with the larger group. Facilitate discussion around the most important skill or idea learned. Ask students, “is this the main point’ of the exhibition? How does this sentence support your understanding of the ***We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century Florida, The Highwaymen*** exhibition?

References:

Backus Museum <https://backusmuseum.org/highwaymen>

Monroe, Gary (2007), Harold Newton: The Original Highwayman. University Press of Florida.

Monroe, Gary (2014), Mary Ann Carroll: First Lady of the Highwaymen. University Press of Florida.

Monroe, Gary (2001), The Highwaymen: Florida's African American Landscape Painters, University Press of Florida.

Smithsonian Museum <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/florida-highwaymen>